United Nations E/CN.18/2017/6

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
15 February 2017

Original: English

United Nations Forum on Forests
Twelfth session
New York, 1-5 May 2017
Item 8 of the provisional agenda*
Forum Trust Fund

Forum Trust Fund

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present note covers the contributions to and expenditures of the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests funded from the Forum Trust Fund for the period 2015-2016. The generous contributions of donor countries and other entities to the Fund are gratefully acknowledged. Without them, implementation of many of the mandated activities would not have been possible.

The present note has been prepared to facilitate discussions at the twelfth session of the Forum under item 8 of the provisional agenda, on the Forum Trust Fund.

* E/CN.18/2017/1.

17-02286 (E) 200217

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. In its multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2015 (Forum resolution 7/1, annex) and at all its sessions since its seventh session, the United Nations Forum on Forests has called upon interested donor Governments, financial institutions and other organizations to make voluntary financial contributions to the Forum Trust Fund. Other countries in a position to do so, as well as other interested parties, have also been urged to contribute to the Fund. To ensure transparency, the Forum secretariat reports to the Forum at each session on the operation of the Fund, including on the amounts contributed, the source of the contributions and a description of how the funds have been expended. It should be noted that the present note is submitted for information. The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, therefore, an estimate as at 31 December 2016.

2. The present note outlines the contributions to and activities funded by the Forum Trust Fund for the period 2015-2016. Activities were carried out pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/98, on the United Nations forest instrument, the multi-year programme of work of the Forum for the period 2007-2015, resolutions of the Forum and Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33, on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015.

II. Contributions to the Forum Trust Fund

3. In the period 2015-2016, eight donor countries contributed generously to the Forum Trust Fund in support of its mandates, sessions and intersessional activities and the work of the Forum secretariat (see table 1). The total contributions to the Fund were approximately $2.1 million inclusive of programme support costs. Implementation of core activities of the Forum would not have been possible without these contributions, which are gratefully acknowledged.

Table 1
Contributions and pledges to the Forum Trust Fund, 2015-2016
(United States dollars)

Contributor	*Total*
China[a]	401 675
Finland[b]	542 950
Japan[c]	53 388
Netherlands[d]	53 203
Republic of Korea[e]	20 360
Russian Federation	400 900

Contributor	*Total*
Switzerland[f]	50 428
United States	600 000
Total contributions and pledges	**2 122 903**
Carry-over from previous year[g]	1 615 173
Grand total	**3 738 076**

Note: The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, therefore, an estimate as at 31 December 2016.

[a] The amount pledged was for activities on the international arrangement on forests and the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network. The donor has also pledged an in-kind contribution of a Junior Programme Officer post for 2017.

[b] The amount contributed was for activities on the international arrangement on forests and to cover the travel costs of representatives from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

[c] The amount contributed was for activities on the international arrangement on forests and on monitoring, assessment and reporting. The donor has also provided an in-kind contribution of a Junior Programme Officer post since April 2016.

[d] The amount contributed was for activities on the international arrangement on forests and to cover the travel costs of representatives from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

[e] The amount contributed was for activities on the international arrangement on forests.

[f] The amount contributed was to cover the travel costs of representatives from developing countries.

[g] Based on the maximum allotment that could be requested from the Forum Trust Fund for 2015.

III. Expenditures of the Forum Trust Fund for 2015-2016

4. Fixed-term and temporary posts funded from extrabudgetary resources accounted for 46 per cent of total expenditures in the period 2015-2016. Travel of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition accounted for 24 per cent of total expenditures during the same period. Detailed information on the expenditures of the Forum Trust Fund is presented in table 2 and the figure.

Table 2
Expenditures of the Forum Trust Fund, 2015-2016

(United States dollars)

Expenditure	*Total*
Staffing costs[a]	1 213 100
Consultants and technical experts	161 700
Travel of representatives and experts	634 000
Travel of staff	158 100

Expenditure	*Total*
Contractual services[b]	129 600
Operating expenses	23 600
Subtotal	**2 320 100**
13 per cent programme support costs	301 613
Total	**2 621 713**

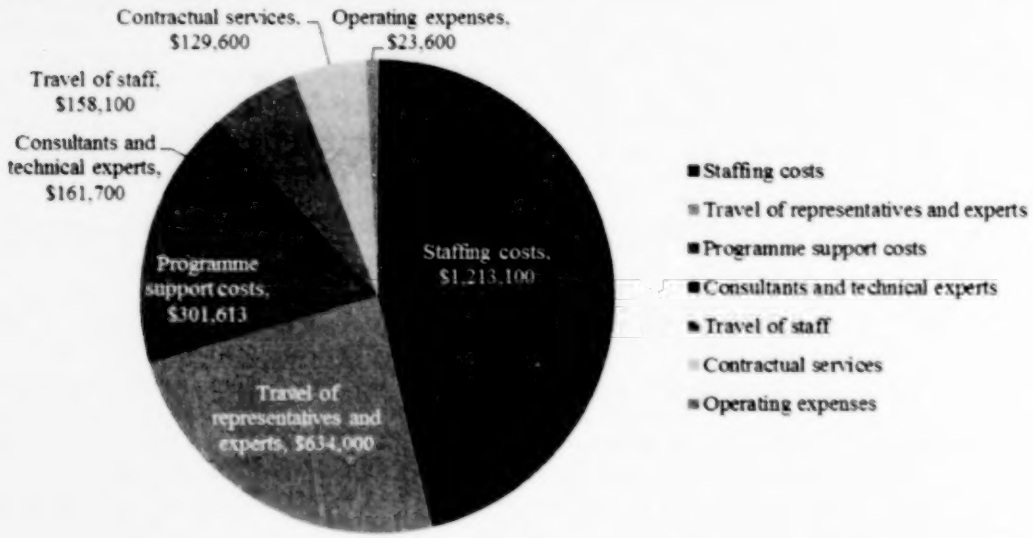
Note: The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, therefore, an estimate as at 31 December 2016.

[a] Includes fixed-term and temporary posts funded from extrabudgetary resources, office space and other staff-related expenses.

[b] Includes conference services.

Figure

Expenditures of the Forum Trust Fund, 2015-2016



5. During the period 2015-2016, extrabudgetary funds were used to supplement funds from the regular budget (Programme 7, Economic and Social Affairs, subprogramme 8, sustainable forest management). These contributions were crucial for funding a substantial part of the activities of the regular programme of work of the Forum secretariat in the period 2015-2016, including the following:

(a) Staffing of the secretariat. In order to implement the mandated intersessional activities, several fixed-term and temporary posts in the Professional and General Service categories were funded from extrabudgetary resources using mainly unearmarked resources of the Forum Trust Fund. During the period 2015-2016, one post at the P-4 level, three at the P-3 level and two in the General Service category were funded from extrabudgetary resources. In 2017, it is expected that

one post at the P-3 level and two in the General Service category will be funded from extrabudgetary resources;

(b) Consultants and technical experts to support Forum activities. Consultants and technical experts were engaged throughout the period 2015-2016 using extrabudgetary resources to support the regular programme of work, including for preparations for the eleventh and twelfth sessions of the Forum, as well as the expert group meetings, operationalization of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and other mandated activities. Extrabudgetary funds from the Forum Trust Fund were used to cover consultants' fees and the costs of their travel to ad hoc expert group meetings in New York and Bangkok;

(c) Travel of representatives and experts. Travel assistance was provided to facilitate the participation of representatives of and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to Forum-related meetings during the period 2015-2016. These included the eleventh session of the Forum, held in New York from 4 to 15 May 2015; the first and second meetings of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group established pursuant to paragraph 48 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33, held in New York from 25 to 27 April 2016 and in Bangkok from 24 to 28 October 2016, respectively; and other meetings related to forest financing, regional and subregional organizations and processes, and major groups;

(d) Travel of staff. Fund resources were used to supplement regular budget funds to cover the travel costs of Forum secretariat staff members participating in key forest-related events, including providing support for the second meeting of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group, forest-related intersessional and regional meetings, and activities related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests;

(e) Contractual services, conference services and operating expenses. Meetings that are not part of official sessions of the Forum are subject to additional costs for facilities, technical support and other related expenses. During the period 2015-2016, extrabudgetary resources from the Forum Trust Fund were used to cover the expenses for the three ad hoc expert group meetings (one on the international arrangement on forests and two on the development of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030 and the quadrennial programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2017-2020). It is useful to note that, in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, ad hoc expert group meetings are not entitled to interpretation services, which in such cases can only be provided on an "as available" basis.

IV. Achievements and results attributable to the Forum Trust Fund

6. The following achievements and results are directly attributable to the contributions made to the Forum Trust Fund:

(a) The successful outcome of the eleventh session of the Forum, at which the Forum recommended to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of a historic draft resolution on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015 (subsequently adopted by the Council as resolution 2015/33) and the ministerial

declaration of the high-level segment of the session on the international arrangement on "The forests we want: beyond 2015";

(b) All the key intersessional activities related to the development of the first United Nations strategic plan for forests, for the period 2017-2030, and the quadrennial programme of work of the forum for the period 2017-2020, including the two meetings of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group on the issue, the session of the working group and the special session of the Forum, as well as the hiring of technical experts in support of those meetings;

(c) Use of Fund resources to supplement funds from the regular budget, the United Nations Development Account and the regular programme of technical cooperation for activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, which is building capacity to mobilize forest financing for sustainable forest management in pilot countries;

(d) Activities related to monitoring, assessment and reporting, including ongoing work related to the development of global forest indicators and a new format and cycle for national reporting, carried out using Fund resources;

(e) Observance of the International Day of Forests in 2015 and 2016 through special events at United Nations Headquarters and communications activities, including social media campaigns, film screenings and exhibits, using Fund resources;

(f) Use of Fund resources to support the travel of Bureau members and representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to the above-mentioned meetings and to the eleventh session of the Forum. The importance of having a balanced representation from both developed and developing countries at Forum meetings cannot be overstated;

(g) The Forum Trust Fund has been a critical source of funding for supplementing the staffing needs of the Forum secretariat, which remains the smallest division in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat. The Fund is currently the only source covering the salaries for the three posts (in the Professional and General Service categories) of the secretariat funded from extrabudgetary resources. Unearmarked resources in the Fund therefore continue to be critical for implementing the substantive and core work mandated by the Forum.

V. In-kind contributions

7. The Forum secretariat is grateful to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for having loaned a staff member in the Professional category, at the P-3 level, on a non-reimbursable-loan basis in 2015. This loan supplemented the staffing needs of the secretariat, providing critical assistance in particular with regard to the monitoring, assessment and reporting work of the Forum.

8. The Forum secretariat would like to express its gratitude to the Government of Japan for having funded a Junior Programme Officer post from April 2016. The staff member is playing an important role in supporting the planning and implementation

of Forum-related meetings and initiatives and, in particular, in substantive activities related to monitoring, assessment and reporting to the Forum.

9. The Forum secretariat is grateful to the Government of China for its pledge to fund a Junior Programme Officer post starting in 2017.

VI. Priorities and challenges

10. Since the Forum was established, its mandates and outputs have continued to grow as a result of decisions taken at a number of its sessions and at other intergovernmental forums. A key challenge has been to secure human and financial resources commensurate with the tasks added to the secretariat's programme of work.

11. The human and budgetary resources needed by the secretariat to support the Forum and its member States have been highlighted and well documented in resolutions of the Forum and Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33, in which the Council recommended to the General Assembly that it consider strengthening the secretariat of the Forum. In 2015, on the basis of provisions contained in resolution 2015/33, the levels of resources under the regular budget were increased to include the addition of one post at the P-4 level, two posts at the P-3 level and one General Service post at the G-6 level.

12. Since its inception in May 2015, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, in its pilot implementation phase, has contributed to the design of national forest financing strategies and assisted countries in mobilizing, accessing and enhancing the effective use of existing financial resources. A key challenge for the Forum secretariat is to raise adequate resources in order to be able to scale up the activities of the Network.

13. Sustained and adequate human and financial resources will continue to be critical to enable the secretariat to support the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015 and to continue to promote the integration of forests into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, table 3 provides information on expected expenditures from the Forum Trust Fund in 2017. It is thus recommended that sustainable and consistent extrabudgetary funds continue to be provided so as to provide the secretariat with a stable basis for the performance of its functions.

Table 3
Estimated expenditures from the Forum Trust Fund, 2017

(United States dollars)

Expenditure	*2017*
Staffing costs[a]	402 200
Consultants and experts[b]	250 000
Travel of representatives and experts[c]	500 000

Expenditure	*2017*
Travel of staff	100 000
Contractual services	80 000
Subtotal	**1 332 200**
13 per cent programme support costs	173 186
Total	**1 505 386**
Carry-over from the previous year	1 116 362
Expected contributions, 2017	1 000 000
Total expected funds, 2017	**2 116 362**

Note: The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, therefore, an estimate as at 31 December 2016. Estimated expenditures refer to funds required to implement the current programme of work of the Forum secretariat; they do not include funding for any additional activities that may be decided upon at the twelfth session of the Forum.

[a] Estimate based on the cost of funding three posts from extrabudgetary resources in 2017.

[b] Includes costs of engaging consultants to support the work of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and the twelfth session of the Forum.

[c] Includes travel costs of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to the twelfth session of the Forum and to expert meetings related to the work of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network in 2017.